

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Over the past several years, the California Department of Conservation's Division of Recycling (CDOC) has commissioned Riester~Robb to research California residents targeted through the state-wide marketing campaign. Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been utilized to assess and monitor the current media and outreach campaign.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the current beverage container recycling message strategy has evolved in the market. This study discovered how the strategy should be enhanced to remain fresh and effective.

OBJECTIVE

Riester~Robb conducted a brand planning project on behalf of the CDOC to further inform, guide and identify the most appropriate means to translate the recommended strategic evolution of the statewide beverage container recycling public outreach campaign efforts. This planning project enabled Riester~Robb and CDOC to take a closer look at California residents to uncover their thoughts and perceptions toward the program and develop/evaluate the most appropriate strategy for the Division of Recycling.

METHODOLOGY

The following outlines the methodology utilized for this study:

Focus Groups

Focus groups are a qualitative research technique to gauge consumer perceptions of message platforms, topic and experiences regarding recycling to assist creative and confirm strategic campaign development. Riester~Robb conducted a total of 14 focus groups with residents throughout the state of California. The groups were segmented by avid recyclers and infrequent recyclers. Four focus groups (two with avid recyclers and two with infrequent recyclers) were conducted in Sacramento and Los Angeles and two focus groups (one with avid and one with infrequent recyclers) were conducted in San Jose, Fresno and San Diego. The groups contained participants representing various ages, ethnicities and income levels consistent with the demographic makeup of each area of study.

The focus group participants were led through a group discussion, which lasted approximately 120 minutes. During each discussion group, participants responded to a series of questions on topics relating to recycling as well as participated in projective exercises.

RESULTS

The following segment documents and portrays the findings of the qualitative research obtained through the research initiative. It is presented in the order in which the information was extracted during the investigation.

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Riester~Robb conducted a series of focus groups in five California cities, including two groups in San Jose on October 11, 2005; two groups in Fresno on October 12; four groups in Sacramento on October 13; four groups in Los Angeles on October 18 and 19, and two groups in San Diego on October 27. Groups consisted of either “Avid Recyclers” or “Infrequent Recyclers” who were full-time residents of California.

Living in California – City Perspective

In order to get focus group members warmed up for the upcoming session, participants were asked to comment on the positive and negative aspects of their respective cities. Recycling and waste were not mentioned unaided during this discussion.

In the larger cities, including San Jose, Sacramento, San Diego and Los Angeles, the participants frequently commented negatively on the cost of living, population and traffic: “*too expensive*,” “*increased crowds*,” “*I worry about crime*,” “*town has exploded*,” “*too much traffic*,” “*congestion*.” Residents of the larger cities also stated that they enjoyed the weather, as well as location: “*paradise*,” “*lots to do*,” “*centrally located*,” “*close to everything – skiing, mountains, parks and ocean*.”

By contrast, participants in Fresno commented that Fresno is “*not too big or too small*,” “*cost of living is cheap*,” “*perfect for kids*,” “*I like that you can get out of town quickly*.” However, they also felt that there was not as much to do as in bigger cities.

Beverage Container Consumption

The majority of the focus group participants consumed water more than any other type of beverage. Most of them preferred bottled water. However, several mentioned that they had water filters at home. Soda and coffee were also frequently consumed beverages among the focus group participants. Other common responses were hot tea, iced tea and juice. Notably, all of these beverages, with the exception of hot tea, come in recyclable containers.

On average, each focus group participant consumed approximately four beverages per day from a recyclable bottle or can and about ten per day for each participant’s household.

Purchasing Beverages

Both avid recyclers and infrequent recyclers purchased the majority of their beverages from grocery stores and convenience stores. Interestingly, participants also frequently mentioned Costco and Sam's Club, indicating that there is a desire to purchase beverages in large quantities (creating large numbers of recyclable containers per household) and/or family size containers at a lower retail price.

What If Bottles and Cans Were Not Available?

To measure the participants' emotional connection with beverage containers, the focus group participants were asked to imagine that all bottles and cans had vanished from the world. Although this was not viewed as a realistic situation, the focus group participants believed that having to find an alternative method to consumer their beverages would be incredibly challenging. Much like in previous studies, the participants indicated that it would be very inconvenient for them and their families if bottles and cans were no longer available. Some commented: *"It would be life altering," "there is no substitute,"* and *"can't imagine it."* When pressed for solutions to this situation, group members thought they would use *"thermoses," "insulated drink pouches"* and *"coolers."* A few frequent recycler participants went so far as to say that they thought it would be a good idea to eliminate bottles and cans: *"Landfills would be less full," "We have too much trash."*

Litter and Waste in California

Although litter and waste did not arise as an issue that was top of mind as it related to the things they disliked about California, the focus group participants were prompted to reveal if they considered litter to be a problem within the state as well as their individual communities.

As in previous focus group studies, the overwhelming majority felt that litter was definitely a problem in their city. This was evident to them because they would see discarded waste along the roads, highways and beaches. In addition, they felt outraged that people would be so irresponsible. *"I don't understand why people throw their trash out the windows of their cars."* A few participants felt that California was cleaner than other states, but still had a long way to go to clean up the problem. In addition, responses indicated a pessimistic attitude towards the litter problem: *"it's the city's problem," "people are slob."* Many in L.A. thought their city was worse than others in the state. Others expressed more optimistic, even proactive views of the problem: *"it's up to each individual," "a lot of recycling is happening," "everybody has to be more conscientious."*

Although almost all of the group members perceived litter to be a problem, none of them mentioned recycling as a possible resolution.

Associations with “Recycling”

Participants were asked to write down the first thought that came to their minds when they heard the word “recycling.”

Members of both the Avid and Infrequent Recycler groups associated recycling with some of the benefits including a feeling of personal responsibility: *“its money,” “cleanliness,” “responsibility,” “cans are not enough,” “cleaner environment,” “less trash,” “resourceful.”* Still others thought of the actual process of recycling: *“it’s a chore,” “inside the bin.”* It is important to note that many participants specifically mentioned the *“recycling bins,”* including a very high awareness for the *“blue”* color of the bins. Finally, the members of the Infrequent groups were much more likely to refer to recycling in terms of recyclable materials: *“bottles and cans,” “tires,” “containers” and “paper.”*

Definition of Recycling

Overwhelmingly, the definitions of recycling were that recycling means to *“reuse”* a product or to turn it into a new product: *“second life for a product,” “bring it back into the system,” “things having a future life.”* Some group members mentioned specific things that can be made from recycled materials, including *“jackets”* and *“playground cover.”*

How Often Do You Recycle?

Participants were asked to approximate what percentage of the time they recycle beverage containers, in order to prompt preliminary discussion about reasons to recycle or obstacles to recycling.

Interestingly, while members of the Infrequent groups often said they recycle as often as 30-90% of the time, many expressed that they were *“too tired,” “too lazy”* or *“not going out of the way”* to recycle. Many said they felt recycling is *“a hassle,”* or *“not convenient.”* Many Infrequent group members, especially in Fresno, mentioned that they were aware that recycling had a monetary benefit: *“it’s for people trying to make money,” “when you are broke, you take it in to get money.”* Finally, Infrequent group members did not indicate that they felt any social responsibility to recycle: *“it’s not a big deal.”* In fact, some seemed to actually feel negatively about people or companies who are Avid Recyclers: *“It is all marketing hype, like at McDonald’s,” “They make it known they recycle but they really don’t.”*

Most Avid group members expressed that they recycle 90% or more of the time and that they tried to encourage friends, family and coworkers to participate as well: *“I wish my husband would recycle all the time,” “I tried to set up a program at work, but compliance was an issue.”*

First Recycling Memory

Groups wrote down and discussed their first memories of recycling as well as their early experiences with recycling as a potential intersection to reconnect with

the issue. This question helped uncover the participant's underlying motivations to recycle and discover the person in the participants' lives that first encouraged them to recycle.

Nearly all participants first recycled as a child and were introduced to the process by a parent. In addition, most participants indicated that their recycling mentor tried to make the process fun, or introduced recycling to try and instill a sense of social responsibility: *"My dad put us all in the Suburban, we were seven kids smashing cans and turning them in," "My mom gave all her cans to a homeless person," "My dad started me on it because he was passionate about it and the environment," "I recycled newspapers with the Boy Scouts," "I felt guilty throwing that stuff away."* Many mentioned the monetary benefits; some even indicated that the money they received from recycling was their first income as a child and thus, a positive memory: *"I went as a kid so I had my own money and did not have to ask my parents," "It felt great getting that cash." "When I was told that I could get money out of it, it made it more exciting."* Most participants said that they felt *"proud," "it was awesome to raise money," "a win-win situation."*

Very few said they had negative memories of their first recycling experience. Some members of the Infrequent Recycler groups said they *"got money but didn't feel anything."* One said he *"hated it,"* perhaps because he *"didn't understand the process."*

Although the majority of their first memories regarding recycling were positive, most did not realize they were recycling at the time. They were simply turning in their beverage containers for a monetary incentive.

▪ Home Recycling

Is Recycling a Chore?

The word "chore" describes a job or task that people are often forced to do, instead of something they choose or want to do. Hearing the word "chore" can evoke feelings of reluctance or distaste for an activity. This question sought to determine whether participants view recycling as part of their daily activities or whether they viewed it as burden to be avoided if possible. Participants were also asked who in their household performs certain chores.

All of the focus group participants were able to list several household chores including vacuuming, laundry, washing dishes and taking out the trash. However, very few mentioned recycling as a chore without being prompted. Once prompted, the participants expressed that recycling was less disliked than certain other chores like washing dishes, taking out trash and cleaning, because many felt that recycling produces a positive outcome.

Infrequent Recyclers often said that they did consider recycling a chore or *“too much trouble.”* Others commented that it *“isn’t that bad.”* Notably, many recyclers said that their children do the recycling in their household.

Overall, most, especially the frequent recyclers, did not consider the act of recycling to be a chore. It had become a part of their daily routine. *“Recycling has become a habit at home. I don’t really think about it.”*

Reasons for Recycling

Participants were asked to describe what makes them want to recycle to help uncover emotional responses to recycling as well as motivators.

Many participants cited the environment and landfill space as reasons they recycle. Even Infrequent Recyclers appeared conscious of the environmental benefits and motivators for recycling: *“Pretty soon, we will just live on a landfill,” “I am interested in improving the planet,” “We are consuming less raw materials if we recycle.”*

Similarly, many Avid group members said that they get a good feeling from recycling: *“It means good citizenship,” “I feel good when I do it.”* Money was not mentioned as often as social responsibility and helping the environment.

Obstacles to Recycling

Groups were asked about the things that prevent them from recycling. This question determined infrequent recycling is often attributable to lack of motivation or ineffectiveness of programs within communities.

Those who said they recycle infrequently stated numerous reasons, including laziness, lack of incentive, and the inconvenience or unavailability of the process: *“It became too much trouble,” “Sometimes I get lazy and just throw it in the garbage,” “There is no recycling service where I live,” “You have to wait in line at the recycling center,” “Garbage can is just closer.”* Notably, participants living in apartments also commented that recycling is often unavailable in apartment complexes or that the small living space makes it difficult and often inconvenient: *“We don’t have containers at our complex,” “There is no program available,” “There isn’t enough space in my apartment for lots of bins,” “There is not enough rooms for all those cans.”* Avid Recyclers also commented that their cities needed to do a better job organizing recycling efforts in apartment complexes.

Avid Recyclers said that nothing prevented them from recycling, many because it has become such a part of their life: *“It’s a habit, I don’t even think about it anymore,” “My mom even pulls items out of the trash.”* Avid Recyclers cited a sense of social responsibility and even guilt as motivators for practicing recycling on such a devoted level: *“It’s the social norm now,” “I feel guilty if I don’t recycle.”*

Recycling More Often

What can help motivate Infrequent Recyclers to recycle more often, or continue to promote recycling among Avid Recyclers? Participants were asked to discuss motivators for themselves and others.

Infrequent Recyclers consistently mentioned money and convenience as motivators for recycling more often: *“Separate it for you,” “Money and simplicity,” “Give me more money and I will recycle more often.”* This is interesting given that most Infrequent group members did NOT mention money as an answer to the earlier question: *“What makes you want to recycle.”*

Avid Recyclers seemed very aware that money was a motivating factor for Infrequent Recyclers: *“I would tell people about the money they can make.”* In addition, a popular answer was *“educate them.”* Avid Recyclers seemed to feel that Infrequent Recyclers simply needed to learn more about why recycling is important, as well as what materials are recyclable: *“A lot of people do not know why they are recycling,” “I don’t know what I can recycle in my community.”*

Feelings Towards Avid Recyclers

Infrequent Recyclers were asked whether they knew people who were dedicated recyclers as a means to reveal emotions towards Avid Recyclers.

Infrequent Recyclers had mixed feelings about Avid Recyclers. Some said they were thankful for Avid Recyclers; many shared the notion: *“I’m glad somebody’s doing it.”* Some used complimentary words such as: *“devoted,” “more conscious and more friendly,” “healthy,” “patient,” “above and beyond the call of duty,”* and many felt that Avid Recyclers were setting a good example.

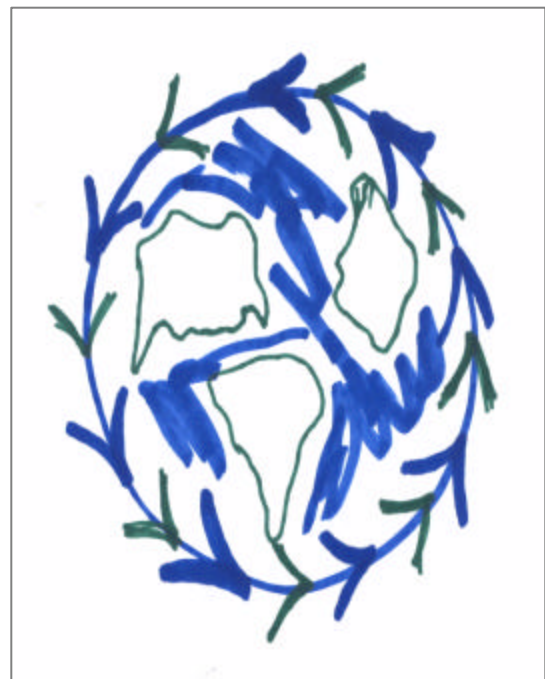
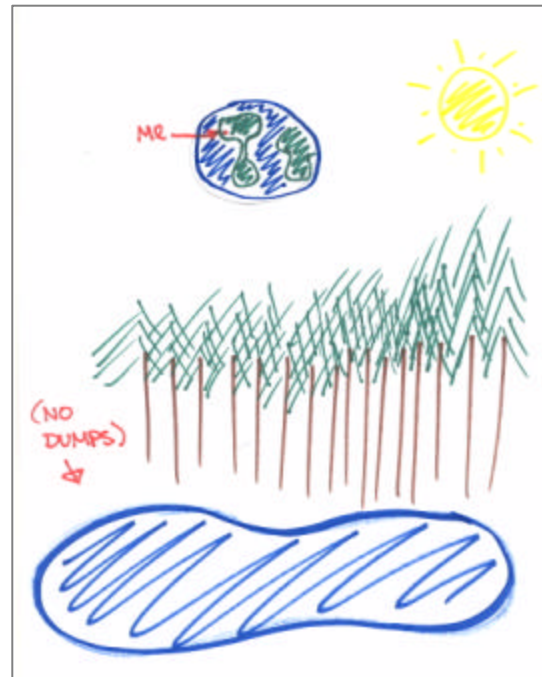
On the contrary, others felt that Avid Recyclers were just recycling for a sense of self-importance, or that it was silly to be so passionate about the process: *“zealots,” “they do it to feel good about themselves,” “these people must have more time on their hands than I do,” “obsessed,” “they are on your case.”*

Perfect “Recycled” World

In this exercise, focus group participants were asked to verbally describe and draw a picture of a world in which everyone recycled to determine what the group members felt were the long-term results of recycling.

Interestingly, participants described their perfect worlds in terms of environmental effects. All groups described similar “perfect worlds,” which included *“blue skies,” “green trees,” “clean water and air,” “no smog,”* and *“happy people.”* Overall, they believed a world where everybody recycles would be a much healthier and happier place to live.

The following are selected images that represent the participants' drawings of a world where everyone recycles:



Recycling Collage

To delve further into the idea of a perfect recycled world, as well as to further uncover motivators for recycling, the focus group participants were asked to create collages using images from magazines that they felt would influence them to recycle. This exercise was presented to Los Angeles groups 3 & 4 and both San Diego groups as a revision to Perfect “Recycled” World exercise.

The “collage” exercise allowed participants to demonstrate deeper and more complex emotional responses regarding motivations to recycle. Consistently, participants included images of children and families and stated that they would recycle because *“I want a cleaner earth for my child,” “health of future generations,”* and *“I think of my kids and our planet.”* Others included images of people and families outdoors, including hunting, *“clean parks and oceans for families,”* and *“nice clean neighborhoods.”* In addition, many collages included images of the environment, including beaches, trees, flowers, animals and even the Grand Canyon. A few participants also included images of products that could be made from recycled materials, such as a car.

▪ **Recycling Knowledge**

CRV

Groups were asked about CRV and its definition to determine their level of awareness for its meaning and purpose, as well as to determine whether participants would associate CRV with benefits of recycling.

Indeed, many participants knew that CRV meant California Redemption Value and that it was implemented to encourage recycling: *“You don’t get it back if you don’t recycle.”*

Although many were aware of CRV, they were uncertain as to how much additional they paid at the store when purchasing beverage containers. There was also some confusion among the group members as to how much they received back when they returned their bottles and cans. They asked questions like, *“Don’t you get like three cents?”* or *“Can you tell me how much I could get back?”*

Costs of Recycling Programs

This question was asked to see if participants were aware of the way their recycling programs work and whether they considered recycling a financial burden in any way.

Participants were generally unsure of the cost of their local recycling programs. Several people thought that it was included in their trash bill. Others said that their programs were free. *“I am not sure if we pay for recycling, but I pay taxes. Recycling programs must be paid for by taxes.”*

Encourage Recycling

Participants were asked to discuss how they would motivate California residents to participate in a recycling program. The notion of “mandatory recycling” was presented to determine participants’ reactions.

Some commented that contests, office parties or donations to charity might provide incentive for residents to participate in recycling programs: *“We could use it for company barbeques or parties,” “People need a prize at the end of the road, create a contest,” “I put up a sign telling people that the money goes to a good cause. They take more care if they know what the money is being used for.”*

Participants were generally turned off by the idea of mandatory recycling. Several said, *“I would hate it,” “how could they enforce it,” “I guess I would get in trouble...”* Conversely, a few participants believed that making beverage container recycling mandatory was the only way to ensure participation.

▪ Recycling On-the-Go

Beverage Container Recycling On-the-Go

Groups were prompted to discuss recycling away from home and on-the-go, in order to determine whether people will go out of their way to recycle when it may not be convenient or whether they will hold onto their containers until recycling is available.

Nearly all Infrequent Recyclers said they do not recycle on-the-go and are not willing to go out of their way. Again, convenience and availability were the greatest deterrents. *“I am not going to look for a bin, it has to be right there,” “There are more trash cans than recycling bins.”* Some Infrequent Recyclers said they do sometimes save recyclables in their cars until there is an opportunity to conveniently process them.

Similarly, many Avid Recyclers mentioned holding onto recyclables in their cars: *“I bring them home and save them for the Boy Scouts.” “I just keep a bag in my car and when it is full, I empty the bag into the recycle bin at home.”* In fact, some said they go out of their way to pick up recyclables while on-the-go: *“When I am hiking or on the beach, I pick up empty containers and bring them home.”*

Making Recycling On-the-Go Simpler

Participants were asked how they felt the state of California could make it easier for people to recycle on-the-go to determine if there were other factors in addition to availability and convenience.

Consistently, participants mentioned increased opportunities and availability of bins, including at work and on the street: *“Have a recycling bin next to every*

trash can.” *“I would do it if we had it at work.”* Apartment dwellers were much more likely to state that their apartment complex should provide recycling opportunities.

▪ **Work Recycling**

Beverage Container Recycling at Work

Groups were asked about the existence and implementation of recycling programs at their places of work. This question helped determine whether people will participate in an office environment, who within their corporations run the office programs, and whether people tend to be proactive if they do not have a program in place.

More than half of group members said their companies do have recycling programs; however, among this portion, there was a general sentiment that many programs are ineffective and that it is hard to motivate people to participate: *“I have a program at my school, but no one does it right,” “It’s hard to implement something that is not mandatory.”* One participant who took it upon himself to implement a recycling program at his workplace expressed frustration with other’s apathy towards the initiative: *“I have tried everything, labeling, color-coordinating, everything, but people do not pay attention and do not care.”* Another group member added: *“People throw pizza in the cans canister.”* Even so, others said that their programs were fairly effective; many mentioned paper and/or bottle and can recycling programs: *“We recycle at our holiday party,” “City Hall has recycling bins in every cubicle.”*

Most participants were unaware of who set up or ran their recycling programs. Some said that the janitors or cleaning crew at their workplace were responsible for taking away the recyclables, which made them feel it was easier than recycling on their own: *“Someone else takes it away, which makes it more convenient.”*

Of those who said their company does not have a program, many commented that no one is willing to assume responsibility for implementing or maintaining a program: *“I would not approach management about starting a program because they would assign me to it,” “I have no time to coordinate a program,” “It would become a mess.”*

Recycling Starter Kits

Participants were asked, if they were given a Recycling Starter Kit, would they be willing to bring it into work and use it to create a recycling program. This question was designed to determine whether people will be proactive about work recycling, if given the materials.

Many Avid Recyclers said they would bring a Recycling Starter Kit into work; many felt they were aware of the need to recycle at work and simply needed the means: *“There’s tons of stuff to recycle,” “I would push it on my company.”*

However, very few Infrequent Recyclers said they would be willing to bring in a Recycling Starter Kit: *“I don’t know how my boss would react.”* Some said they would not want to seem like they were pushing recycling on coworkers: *“I wouldn’t want to make people do it.”* Those that said they were willing said they felt it was *“the right thing to do.”*

Although not all of the focus group participants were willing to implement a beverage container recycling program at their place of work, most felt it was important for their workplace to offer a way to recycle their bottles and cans.

Benefits of Office Recycling for Companies

This question was to determine if and how group members felt that companies benefit from office recycling programs.

Many participants felt that office recycling programs had public image benefits for companies: *“Social responsibility,” “good from a PR perspective,” “It would make companies look good.”* In addition, some felt that companies could save money through programs: *“maybe they’d get a tax incentive,” “get money from CRV.”*

Others felt that smaller companies, or those with low overhead, such as a non-profit organization, could not afford to set up recycling programs, or would not be able to make any money.

Sales Pitch

Focus group participants were asked to imagine that they were in charge of selling recycling to companies and individuals, and to create a sales pitch that would encourage companies to create programs. This exercise allowed participants to detail how they would motivate *others* to recycle.

Most participants invoked a sense of social responsibility in their sales pitches: *“Clean the planet, it is your home too,” “Do you part,” “Help save sea creatures,” “Focus on future generations.”* Others focused on the ease of recycling: *“It’s a no-brainer,” “Want an easy way to get rid of our trash?”* A few participants mentioned the financial benefits: *“Profit margin focus,” “Management will give you something special.”*

■ Positioning Statements

Positioning statements were presented to the group participants. These position statements are built around seven unique concepts which are detailed below. The

statements are designed to discover how these participants emotionally respond to these focused concepts.

- **Reincarnation** – *Recycling gives me personal satisfaction. I recycle my beverage containers because the bottles and cans I recycle are turned into useful products like clothing, building materials, furniture and more.*
- **Role Model** – *As a parent/adult, it is my responsibility to act as a good role model for my children as it relates to recycling. It is important for me to teach them the good habit of recycling their bottles and cans so they can have a clean environment for the future.*
- **California Pride** – *California is the most amazing state to live in. It has sandy beaches, snow covered mountains and fantastic cities. We all need to pitch in to keep California looking great; so let's all recycle bottles and cans.*
- **Recycling Advocate** – *My best friend is incredibly passionate about recycling, especially beverage containers. It is his/her personal mission to make sure everyone recycles their bottles and cans, even when it is inconvenient or there isn't a recycling bin available nearby. They have even initiated beverage recycling programs at their place of work. It is people like them who make California an even better place to live. To them, I would like to say "thank you."*
- **Local Hero Challenge** – *The San Francisco 49ers / Fresno State Bulldogs / Sacramento Kings / Los Angeles Lakers / San Diego Chargers want each of you to take on the recycling challenge. Let's join together to ensure that the Bay Area / Fresno / Sacramento / Los Angeles / San Diego is number one in California bottle and can recycling.*
- **Drowning in Bottles and Cans** – *If we don't increase our recycling activity, California will look like a different state very soon. The beaches will overflow with trash, empty bottles and cans will fill the streets of your neighborhood, and your kids will have to trench through the bottles and cans to their school bus. Only you can prevent this environmental disaster – Recycle!*

Following is a list of questions each participant answered for each positioning statement:

In front of you, there is a series of five statements. Each statement has been developed to describe how you might feel about recycling. Please read each statement and answer the following questions regarding each one:

- *What is the first thought that comes to mind after reading this statement?*

- *What is the main message of the statement? What do you understand?*
- *How does this statement make you feel?*
- *On a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest and one being the lowest, how much does this statement motivate you to consider recycling?*
- *On a scale of one to ten, please rank how much you like this statement?*

The focus group participants responded to each of the questions on paper in order to gauge their initial reactions to each positioning statement without the influence of others. Upon completion of the exercise, the position statements were discussed in-depth.

The following chart contains the combined scores from the written portion of this exercise.

Positioning Statements	...how much does this statement motivate you to consider recycling?	...how much do you like this statement?	Total Score
Reincarnation	7.82	7.95	7.89
Role Model	8.41	8.50	8.46
California Pride	7.18	7.85	7.87
Recycling Advocate	7.28	7.13	7.20
Local Hero	5.91	5.91	5.98
Drowning in Bottles and Cans	6.30	5.95	6.13

Reincarnation

This statement ranked highly among participants and was often named as a favorite. Many said that this statement was true, although they would not have thought of the concept of reincarnation as it relates to recycling. This statement appealed to many participants because it made them think of the future life of recyclable materials and the real purpose for recycling: *“This is intriguing and I want to know more,” “I like this a lot. It means my effort is worth something,” “This is what it means to recycle.”*

Role Model

This was, not surprisingly, a favorite statement for many group members, given that participants had previously mentioned children and protecting the earth for future generations as a motivator to recycle. Many said that it was important to pass recycling knowledge on to our children: *“This could lead to two generations of recyclers,” “It makes me happy to see them being good kids.”* This was true even among individuals who did not have children.

A common sentiment among Infrequent participants was that this statement made them feel guilty, which, in turn, motivated many: *“Makes me feel like a bad parent because I don’t recycle,” “I should be a stronger parental example for my kids,” “I need to do it for my kids.”*

Interestingly, some members of the Avid groups did not find this statement as motivating; perhaps because recycling is already such a part of their life: *“It’s a weak statement because we always do this,” “It’s second nature to me.”*

California Pride

This statement did not strike most participants as a powerful or motivational statement. All agreed that California is a beautiful and unique state, but most felt that pride was not a big enough factor to motivate people to recycle. Many Avid Recyclers felt this message was too weak to be motivational; many seemed pessimistic the effectiveness of the statement: *“People don’t care,” “We are too self-centered,” “It’s an overused statement, so the impact is lost.”* Some Infrequent group members agreed: *“This does not inspire me,” “It’s just a nice thought.”*

Those that cited this statement as a favorite (a few in each group) said that this message evoked a sense of pride and ownership for the state: *“Be proud of where you live,” “This hit my ownership button.”*

Recycling Advocate

Most Avid Recyclers enjoyed this statement with many commenting that they could relate or *“this sounds like me.”* Many Avid group members who did not feel this described them still said that this statement made them feel good or could appreciate the notion that there were dedicated recyclers out there. A few Infrequent Recyclers said that while they could not relate to this statement, they *“wish[ed] there were more people like this,”* and *“It takes one person to change things.”*

However, the majority of Infrequent Recyclers were angered or put off by this statement. Many said it made them feel guilty, which most felt was unfair: *“Either you have the time or you don’t,” “Don’t make me feel bad,” “This sounds like an insane person,” “It makes me feel like an outcast.”*

Local Hero Challenge

The “Local Hero Challenge” positioning statement was presented in Sacramento, San Jose and Fresno only.

The majority of participants did not feel that sports team members were the most appropriate people to promote the recycling cause. Many were turned off by “overpaid” celebrities or athletes telling people to recycle; many felt athletes would only do this for the PR value: *“I don’t need a bunch of millionaires telling*

me what to do,” “More publicity for the star than the cause,” “Don’t use politicians or celebrities.”

Drowning in Bottles and Cans

The “Drowning in Bottles and Cans” positioning statement was developed upon completion of the San Jose, Fresno and Sacramento focus groups and was tested during the Los Angeles and San Diego groups, to replace “Local Hero Challenge.” A more dramatic statement like this one sought to reveal increased emotional responses from group members.

Reactions to this statement were divided. Many participants felt this statement was “overkill,” or “just a scare tactic”: *“This could never happen,” “So dramatic it isn’t real,” “Unrealistic.”*

On the other hand, many participants felt this statement was realistic and in turn, one of the most motivating of the positioning statements. Several called it “a wake up call,” and commented that it evoked, again, “guilt” among Infrequent Recyclers. Others said: *“I’m shocked,” “We need to do something so this does not happen,” “It gives you a visual of what could happen.”*

After this statement was discussed, the participants were informed that on average their households consumed over 100 bottles and cans per day. This statement was shocking to most. *“Wow! That is a lot.” “Pretty soon we could be drowning in bottles and cans!”* This seemed to make the “Drowning in Bottles and Cans” statement more realistic.

▪ **Advertising**

This discussion sought to determine whether participants could recall any recycling advertising and/or messaging, as well as to determine if any specific ad or message was top-of-mind.

Advertising Recall

There was very little unaided awareness for past recycling advertising among the focus group participants; however, aided recall was high for certain ads. The most commonly recalled ad was the “Crying Indian.” *“I remember the ad with the Crying Indian standing in front of a stream. It was many years ago.”*

Additionally, focus group members recalled other waste and recycling ads including “Give a Hoot, Don’t Pollute,” and another humorous ad where a man dumps garbage on a doorstep. A few recalled the California Department of Conservation’s Division of Recycling’s tagline *“It’s good for the bottle, it’s good for the can.”*

ANALYSIS

The following segment analyses the results of the qualitative research and details potential challenges and opportunities. It further relates the recent findings to results from the 2001 and 2003 qualitative recycling studies.

REOCCURRING THEMES

In this paragraph, Riester~Robb summarizes findings that have not only been consistent with previous studies but also seemed to be out of the Departments' involvement or impact radius.

- Recycling continues to lack top-of-mind awareness. Waste and recycling appeared to be more of an issue among the residents of California during the 2001 study. Due to societal changes and world events such as the war in Iraq, changes in governmental leadership in the U.S. and California, the impact of natural disasters, etc., the topic of recycling has become less of a priority, and is either habitual behavior for some or not part of peoples' lives.
- As with previous 2001 and 2003 studies, California residents still feel that they encounter numerous obstacles to beverage container recycling resulting in the sense that recycling is inconvenient. This is especially true among apartment dwellers that have a lack of storage space or still no recycling programs in their complexes. In addition, many complained about the lack of recycling opportunities within their places of work. Also, a few were still required to sort their recyclable materials into different bins at home.
- Recycling on-the-go was still perceived as a challenge for most of the participants, consistent with studies from previous years. Avid Recyclers were much more likely to think about recycling on-the-go than Infrequent Recyclers.

Consistent with 2003 findings, participants still feel that while their on-the-go lifestyle has evolved to include the use of many portable beverage containers, the recycling process has not evolved to include increased on-the-go recycling opportunities. The majority felt it was necessary for cities to provide recycling bins next to every trash bin.

However, in comparison to the 2003 study, participants appeared increasingly willing to hold onto empty beverage containers in their car until a recycling opportunity presented itself. Most seemed accepting of this as a step in the process until increased recycling opportunities are made available by the state.

OPPORTUNITIES

The following paragraphs are outlining potential opportunities and intersections for the CDOC to reignite the audiences' interest in the topic/behavior of recycling.

- Overall, there was a lack of awareness around the topic of recycling and the CRV specifically. Most respondents were unclear as to how much money they would receive if they recycled their beverage containers. In addition, most were unaware of the amount they paid per container at the store.
- While many of the focus group participants claimed to recycle beverage containers the majority of the time, especially at home, many were not sure if their efforts, were making an impact overall...they just hoped they were.
- Many seemed to have lost interest and trust in recycling and the recycling process because they are unaware and unsure of the details, including which materials can be recycled and how the recyclables will be reused.

This is consistent with conclusions from both the 2001 and 2003 studies and demonstrates a continuing need for education.

- Children seemed to be a motivating factor for recycling, even among individuals without children. Many felt good about themselves for educating their children about recycling. Participants believed children lacked role models and it was important to guide children to recycle. There was a sense that teaching children to recycle would propagate recycling for years to come, as well as protect the environment for future generations.
- Consistent with previous studies, protecting the environment was a common theme and was often cited as a strong motivator for recycling. This was true despite the fact that participants are still unsure of how, exactly, the process benefits the environment. Only surface knowledge is available.
- On the topic of recycling at work, the participants believed that their companies were responsible for providing beverage container recycling programs for employees. Participants understood that companies benefit from having such a program by creating a positive image within the community and reducing their waste bill.

In comparison to previous studies, there appears to be an increased frequency of office recycling programs in general. However, participants

without a program in place were still not willing to take it upon themselves to implement a beverage container recycling program at their place of business because they feared management would assign them the responsibility of implementing and maintaining the program in addition to their regular responsibilities.

The CDOC has an opportunity to further promote the Recycling Starter Kit and its ease in helping companies set up and maintain recycling programs, as well as promote other companies' past successes with the Kit.